WHAT IS SEEN IS NOT WHAT IT IS

LIBERATION FROM SUFFERING THROUGH THE RIGHT VIEW

THE ESSENCE OF BUDDHIST TEACHINGS AS ILLUMINATED BY

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INTRODUCTION

A young couple moved into a new neighbourhood. The next morning at the breakfast table the young woman sees her neighbour hanging the wash outside.

“That laundry is not very clean”, she said.

“She doesn’t know how to wash; maybe she should use different laundry soap.” Her husband looked on, but remained silent.

Every time her neighbour would hang her wash to dry, the young woman would make the same comments.

About one month later, the woman was surprised to see a nice clean wash on the neighbour’s line and said to her husband;

“Look, she has learned how to wash cleanly; I wonder who taught her to do that.”

The husband quietly said;” I got up early this morning and cleaned the windows!”

This is a parable that has been circling around in recent times through email and social media drawing attention to the errors of judgment we make in life due to our wrong view.

There is no doubt that the readers have come across stories of similar nature, most of which relate to mistakes we do in our day to day life, at times.

However, the Buddha revealed to the world that our life as a whole is full of ‘errors’ that we make constantly due to ignorance.

The nature of our erroneous judgement is also related to that of a person looking at the world outside through a pair of coloured glasses, for e.g. blue, to believe that everything that exists out there is in blue colour. Parallels are drawn to this with our life experiences where we are deceived in a similar manner constructing a world around us with people & things. The external world as proclaimed by Buddha is a projection of our minds full of erroneous constructions made due to ignorance, similar to the experience of looking through Blue glasses. Therefore, we are said to be having a wrong view, not seeing the things as they are. Gaining the Right view or *Samma Ditti* is fundamental in Buddhist teachings to eliminate the wrong view and discard ignorance in order to achieve liberation leading to attainment of nirvana by pursuing the Noble Eightfold Path as shown by the Buddha. The Buddha realised the reality of existence on his own 2600 year ago and called upon the worldly beings to remove the ‘blue glasses’ they are wearing and to see it for themselves.

This book is my humble effort to share the essence of the Buddhist teachings as explained by many teachers of dhamma in modern times particularly by Venerable Mankadawala Sudassana of the Labunoruvakanda forest Monastery in Kekirawa, Sri Lanka, with the English reading aspirants of *Nirvana*. The topics discussed are essentially based on hundreds of sermons delivered by Venerable Sudassana, which are available to Sinhala listeners, in the World Wide Web.

The focus of the following chapters is on achieving the Right View (*Panna*) recognised as the forerunner in the path to the cessation of suffering leading to Liberation and ultimate Enlightenment, aided by the Right Concentration (*Samadhi*) cultivated through the Moral Conduct (*Sila*).

Extreme care has been taken to the best of my ability to convey the salient concepts discussed by the Venerable in his invaluable sermons, in plain English, however, I apologise for any mistakes or shortcomings that are purely unintentional.

I extend my gratitude to all venerable monks and scholars of dhamma for their invaluable efforts and kindness in presenting the precious teachings of Buddha to us lay people, to the devoted followers of dhamma who introduce such rare dhamma sermons to the world by publishing them in the internet and finally, to my friend for his generous support and encouragement by undertaking the task of printing this book. May the merits gained, be bestowed upon all of you!

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1 THE DHAMMA THAT WAS UNHEARD BEFORE

In his first sermon to the five disciples, '*Dhammacakkapavatana sutta*', Lord Buddha claimed his attainment of a **dhamma that was not heard previously from anyone**, (*pubbe annasussathi dhammesu)* - whether from a god, 'the creator' *(brahma) or* god of death (*mara)* - and said that "Such was the Vision, Insight, Wisdom, Knowing and Light that arose in me about things not heard before".

Considering that there were many other known & accepted beliefs prevailing at the time and the fact that he has followed teachings of many such beliefs and practices before attaining the supreme enlightenment, Buddha's above statement need to be examined in depth.

THE RIGHT VIEW

Further reference is made in the same sermon where he declared to have gained the knowledge, '*Yatha buthan Nana Dassanam*', or **seeing things as they are, whether a Buddha is present in the world or not**. This implies that we do not see things as they are, in other words, all objects sensed through our sense bases are identified only as how we assume they are. This reality which is only realised by a person who attain supreme enlightenment (*Sammasambuddha),* with a wisdom that is beyond this world (*lokottara nana*), was shown to us by Gautama Buddha as the 'Right view' being the first of the Noble Eight Fold Path

'Wrong view' to which we are subjected to is due to ignorance (*Avidya)* defined as having no knowledge of; suffering, cause for suffering, cessation of suffering and the path for the cessation of suffering ('*Dukke annanan, Dukka Samudaye annanan, Dukka Nirodaye annanan, Dukka Nirodhagamini Patipadave annanan)*. It is also the ignorance of impermanence *(Anicca*), suffering *(Dukka*) & non-self *(Anatma*), the three Marks of Buddhism.

In this very first sermon, Buddha went on to teach his disciples the cause and effect phenomena that applies to all conditioned things when he preached , *yan kinci samudaya dhammam sabbantham nirodha dhammam,* - **'whatever that arises due to causes all that are subject to cessation"** which is the principle of dependant origination (*paticcasamuppada)* theory, the essence of his Dhamma.

The sutta says the eye of Dhamma arose in Kondanna in realising the above. The first disciple of the Buddha to have become a stream-winner was Ven. Kondanna while he was listening to *Dhammacakkapavatana* sutta.

Through this unprecedented wisdom, Buddha revealed to the world the reality or truth which may be summarised as,

'The past has ceased, the future is yet to be, and the present is subject to momentary arising and ceasing'.

In this mundane world we believe in that there is a past, present and a future, hence we have the feeling of 'existence and presence'. In our minds we have a place as a house from where we came from this morning and a place to go back later in the day, similarly a work place, people we know and so on. In accordance with the dhamma thought by Buddha this is not possible as we only experience what we encounter through our senses at any given moment which ceases away as soon as it arises, hence the world that arises within us through our sense bases ceases away momentarily. '**Being non-existent it arises and, ceases without leaving anything behind**'. This occurrence takes place in such a rapid succession that what appears to be a permanent world is created within us as we are deceived of its momentary nature. This will be further discussed in this chapter.

For us who are caught up in our mundane existence the above dhamma would seem incomprehensible as without the past and the present there is no world and hence no existence. Does it mean both bad and good experiences and memories we have are not favourable? The answer is, in the worldly context it is hard to believe but the Buddha's declaration is on what he saw from beyond this world, *lokottara dahama*, in relation to the unconditional state of '*nibbana*'.

A further clarification to this dhamma is found in Buddha's answer to a question from a god named Rohitassa, where he preached,

"It is in this very fathom-long physical frame with its perceptions and mind, that, I declare, lies the world, and the arising of the world, and the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world."

Rohitassa Sutta: Samyutta Nikaya (Translation: Bikkhu Nanananda, 2007)

Now the question arises why we do not see things as they are?

The ignorance (also called delusion) is our inability to see (or hear, taste, smell or feel) things 'as they are' through our sense bases due to hindrances (*nivarana)* causing unwise attention or '*Ayoniso Manasikara'*. The Buddha described five kinds of hindrances i.e, sensual pleasures*,* Aversions, Slop & Toper, Restlessness and Doubt*.* Hindrances are to be overcome by cultivating *Concentration which* in turn requires restraining of senses & thus *morality. Hence, Concentration, Morality & Wisdom (Sila Samadhi Panna) is described as the path to liberation i.e the N*oble Eight Fold Path which is expanded as*, the* Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Effort, Right Livelihood, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration *(Samma Ditti, Samma Sankappa, Samma vaca, Samma kammantha, Samma Vayama, Samma Ajiva , Samma Sathi & Samma Samadhi).*

Seeing things as they are develops wisdom by removing ignorance. If we are to examine this further, the ignorance is the mistaken identity of name-matter *(nama rupa*) as objects. In other words, accepting the images grasped by the mind as external objects when in fact, these images are mere formations in the mind in relation to external objects consisting of four great elements. This is evident in our ability to remember things exactly the way we first saw them. Here, we retrieve the object in image form (as name-matter or the images

created in mind due to eye contact) through mind and grasp that mental image as something that exist externally. The same apply to the other objects sensed through ear, nose and so on. What we experience in dreams are no different to this process which we experience when we are said to be ‘awake’, hence, we worldly beings are in fact ‘dreaming’ in our real life which Buddha has referred to as Dream of Kama (*svapnopaka kama)*. Buddha is called ‘The ‘Awakened’ one as he was not subject to this existence in ‘life dream’ anymore.

DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

As much as oil, wick & the flame are pre requisites to (lamp) light and formation of a shadow in the presence of sunlight, a tree and the ground, combination of an external object, the eye and eye consciousness result in eye contact or *chakku sampassa* which creates *feeling (vedana)* and hence the process of five clinging aggregates. Due to combination of causes a resultant effect is formed & when the causes cease to exist, so does the effect or the product which cease to exist. This is the theory of cause and effect as taught by Buddha, *Hetun paticca sambutan hetu banga nirujjathi*.

With regard to the examples discussed above, it is clear that the oil, flame or the wick of the lamp alone cannot create the light and the tree, sunlight and ground alone cannot create the shadow of the tree, similarly, eye, object or the eye consciousness alone cannot create the resultant eye contact which is only a product of the former. Therefore, the image seen by the eye due to eye contact is not the object as we are used to believe, but one formed in the mind due to combination of factors. We express either our liking or disliking to the feeling generated by this mental image or name- matter and accordingly arrive at erroneous conclusions, mistakenly identifying it as the actual object that exist externally.

All objects are formed by four elements Earth, Water, Fire & Air (*patavi, apo,* t*hejo* and *vayu)*. Forms (*rupa*) also are subjected to arising passing phenomenon and therefore are in a state of flux. What is seen as explained above is only a product of eye contact resulting from the eye meeting an object and arising of eye consciousness creating a mental image. As soon as the eye contact arises, it passes away as the conditions cease to exist. Notwithstanding, we grasp the mental image that is formed in our mind, through its feeling and the perception, as an object that permanently exist. Through wise attention (*yoniso manasikara*) one is able witness the impermanence of this conditioned phenomena.

Venerable Sudassana further explains this with the mirage example where an animal, for instance a deer, is being deceived by a mirage in the desert as water. In a similar situation a wise man will identify this occurrence as an illusion created in the mind due to particular conditions. “The deer assumes that what is seen (water) is present out there whereas the wise man sees that as an illusion of water formed in the mind which is not present externally.” However, it is important to note that the same man fails to realise that in his real life he is being deluded in a similar fashion to that of a deer in the desert.

All things that arise on account of 'causes' are said to be conditioned phenomena or '*sanskara*'. Sanskara is formation, fabrication and determination of form the way we believe

they are as we perceive them. Having perceived wrongfully we determine that each object, which is either seen, heard smelled, tasted or felt, erroneously and respond in form of thought, speech or action (*citta, vachee or kaya sanskara*). These expressions are also classified in accordance to the karma formation as (i) meritorious (punyabhi-sanskara), (ii) sinful (apunyabhi-sanskara) and (iii) static (anenjabhi-sanskara).

An interesting analogy to this dhamma is found in an animal's response to its reflection in water, for example a dog when it looks into a well, would assume there is another dog inside the well and react by barking at it. A man with knowledge will r such reflection as it is, and will know that the image will only be there as long as he looks into the well and will disappear when he moves away from the well i.e, when the conditions are no more. However, a dog will keep on barking even after moving away, thinking that another dog in still inside the well. Interestingly the man who is not deceived in this instance is said to be constantly deluded in his worldly existence unable to realise the consistency of this reality, thus he is gripped by the notion of 'existence 'and 'presence' in compounded things.

Such deluded determination (*avidya sankhara*) result in re-cognition (*prathisandhi vinnana)* and hence the continuation of the samsaric existence as shown in the process of the Dependant Origination chain, *Avidya Paccaya Sankara* , *Sankara Paccaya Vinnana* and so on, taught by Buddha, leading to suffering in *Jathi, Jara, Marana*, and so on.

The Buddha concluded,

'When this is, that is,
When this arises, that arises,
When this is not, that is not,
When this ceases, that ceases'

EXTREMES OF VIEW

Further elaborating on the path to liberation which he introduced as the Middle Path the Buddha has said *'Everything exists': That is one extreme. 'Everything doesn't exist': That is a second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathagata teaches the Dhamma via the middle."- Kaccayana Gotta Sutra, Samyuththa Nikaya. (Translation: Bikkhu Thanissaro, 1997)*

Responding to a question by Ven.Kaccayana on the definition of the Right View, Buddha clarified, *"This world, Kaccayana, is generally inclined towards two views: existence and non-existence, to the person who perceives with right wisdom the arising of the world as it come to be, the notion of non-existence in the world does not occur. Kaccayana, to him who perceives with right wisdom the ceasing of the world as it come to be, the notion of existence in the world does not occur."*

Expanding on inclination to extremes the Buddha identified the two extreme views known as eternalism and *nihilism (Sassatha ditti and Ucceda ditti*). The former relates to the belief of a continuous self that goes from one life to the other. Accordingly, some believe that

good deeds help you to be born in heavenly existences and the bad deed to the lower realms. This was proclaimed by the preachers at the time who were able to see their past lives having achieved higher levels of *dyanas* and who were able to see their previous existences as evidence for rebirth. In accordance with nihilist believers (*ucceda vadi*), there is no life after death and thus one just need to enjoy in this life to the maximum. The preachers of this belief, though they had achieved higher levels of *dyanas* were unable to see their past lives as their previous existences in Material /Immaterial worlds spans a number of eons beyond which they are unable to look back. Therefore, they believed that there were no previous existences and thus no future existences either.

Buddha was critical of both extremes of view and preached the middle path, the causal effect existence. ‘Things arise being non-existent before and cease without a trace’ confirms that the extremes of the ‘past’ and ‘future’ are irrational.

When one sees that things arise due to conditions the nihilist view is released when he sees their cease or passing away due to separation of conditions, the view of eternalism releases.

When one realises through insight meditation that he is deluded in view in the manner discussed above, he or she sees suffering as due to ignorance, or mistaken identity, of the objects (not seeing things as they are) and identifies the cause for suffering as responding to mistaken identities and fabrications or determinations in accordance with ones preferences (likes and dislikes). Consequently his attachment to his own fabrication or determination falls apart and when detached the cause for attachment, craving, ends. Then he sees cease of suffering and reach the path to liberation leading to the supreme bliss of nirvana.

This is the *sandittika* quality of the dhamma as emphasised in the stanza *Swakkatho Baghavatho sandittika,* which mean results in this existence itself, here and now, to the one who follows the path.

2 DISTORTIONS AND DENSITIES OF THE MIND

VIPALLASA

Due to erroneous judgments, says Ven. Ledi Sayadaw," *we make some serious errors on many levels as we attempt to make sense of the world formed around us. As a result we fail to see three important characteristics of the conditioned phenomena, i.e impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukka) and non-self (anatma)*".[1]

This is due to distortions (*vipallasa*) which are fundamental to the Buddhist teachings of ignorance or delusion. The distortions of the mind work on three levels of scale. First, distortions of perception *(sanna-vipallasa)* cause us to misperceive the information coming to us through the sense doors. "*We might mistake a rope by the path as a snake, for example. Normally such errors of vision are corrected by a more careful scrutiny, but sometimes these sensory mistakes are overlooked and remain."*

Distortions of thought *(citta-vipallasa)* have to do with the next higher level of mental processing, when we find ourselves contemplating over things in our minds. The mind tends to elaborate upon perception with these thought patterns, and when our thoughts are based upon distortions of perception, then they too will be distorted.

Eventually such thought patterns can become habitual, and evolve into distortions of view *(ditti-vipallasa). "We might become so convinced that there is a snake by the path that no amount of evidence to the contrary from our own eyes or reason, nor the advice of others, will shake our beliefs and assumptions. We are stuck in a mistaken view*."

Furthermore, it is noted that these three levels of distortion are cyclical — our perceptions are formed in the context of our views, which are strengthened by our thoughts, and all three works together to build the cognitive systems which develop our sense of personality and its uniqueness.

One should recognise that the particular distortions mentioned above correspond to following three characteristics. Taking what is impermanent *(anicca)* as permanent, what is inherently unsatisfactory *(dukkha)* as a source of satisfaction, and what is without a self *(anatta)* to constitute a self — "these are the primary ways we distort reality to the profound disadvantage of ourselves and others. Seeing the unwholesome *(asubha)* as wholesome rounds out the traditional list of four *vipallasas"* says Ven. Sayadaw.

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[1] Sayadaw.L.Ven. 1999,The Manual of Buddhism

The Buddha has said

> ***Anicce niccasaññino, dukkhe ca sukhasaññino;***
> ***anattani ca attāti, asubhe subhasaññino;***
> ***micchādiṭṭhihatā sattā, khittacittā visaññino.***
>
> Perceiving permanence in the impermanent, and pleasant in the painful
> and self in the impersonal, and beauty in the repulsive
> Beings are injured by wrong-views,
> minds unhinged, they go mad. (Translation: Dharmacari Jayarava)
>
> *Vipallasa Sutta, Anguttara Nikaya*

DENSITIES

It is further stated that our clear vision is obstructed by Densities or crowding (*Ghana*) of continuity, of whole, of function and of Object. These give rise to illusions or distortions (*Vipallasa)* discussed above by three functions of the mind i.e. by perception (*sanna*), by thought (*citta*), and by view (*ditti*) as to create four false notions of Permanence, Wholesomeness, Happiness and Self in what are essentially Impermanent, Unwholesome, Unsatisfactory and without Self.[2]

The above four densities are called the Density of Continuity or unbrokenness (*Santhathi Ghana*), the density of Whole (*Samuha Ghana*) The Density of Function (*Kriya Ghana*) and the Density of Object (*Arammana Ghana*) .

Dr W.F. Jayasuriya in his book 'The psychology and Philosophy of Buddhism' writes, "*The Continuity is the seeming existence of mind and matter, in time, as continuous things when the truth is the momentariness (Transitionary Nature) in all things. For instance, what is seen as a continuous line to a naked eye is seen as separate dots when seen through a magnifying glass, if a torch be whirled we see it as a single ring of light*."[3]

The nature of seeing a continuation in the arising and passing of aggregates (*skandas*) in form of name-matter (*nama-rupas*) is *santhathi*.

"*The Density of Whole is the notion of wholeness of a body whereas it consists of parts and units such as when one imagines a chariot as one whole body though it consists of many parts.*" Another example would be seeing and noting a heap of sand when in real terms it's a pile of sand particles grouped together.

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[2] Chandawimala.R.Ven, 2009, Burumaye Puhunu Karana pauranika Sathipattana Bhavana Kramaya

[3] Jayasuriya. W.F, 1988,The psychology and Philosophy of Buddhism

Density of function is the acceptance as one function in an action which in fact has a number of sub actions on it such as when the foot is raised, trust forward and then put down.

The density of object is the acceptance of oneness in kind whereas it is not so. "*What is seen as white light when sent through a prism splits into the rainbow colours. Although we have an illusion as one colour it consists of a number of colours*."

On account of such densities, Dr Jayasuriya writes, "*distortions of three functions of the mind namely, perceiving, knowing and opinion formation occurs and are called Sanna Vipallasa, Citta Vipallasa and Ditti Viplasa respectively as mentioned above. These three in respect of each of the four false notions noted before as permanence, happiness, wholesomeness and self make 12 illusions. The liberation from these illusions is the key to the attainment of Nibbana. They are corrected in stages as a person proceeds to the Arahat state*."

Buddha preached four Frames of Mindfulness *(Sathara Sathipattana*) meditation as the only path, *'ekayano maggo,' to* overcome these errors of view and to see things as they are (Right View) and thereby to follow the noble eightfold path to attain the supreme bliss of nirvana. *Sathara Sathipattana* meditation focuses on observing the arising & ceasing phenomenon of aggregates. Through mindfulness regarding the body *(kayanupassana) one* clears the view to see unwholesomeness, through mindfulness of the feelings or sensations (*Vedananupassana)* unsatisfactoriness, through mindfulness of mind or consciousness (*cittanupassna),* impermanence and through mindfulness of mental phenomena (*dhammanupassna),* non- Selfless and so on.

3 THE MORAL CONDUCT THAT IS FREE FROM ANY WRONG VIEWS

The Buddha recognised three wrong views in the worldly existences.

1. The first is the view that obstructs becoming in higher realms as well as attaining enlightenment (*nirvana*). It's called *Saggavarana and Maggavarana, the* former conceals happy destinations, *sugathi* while the latter, *maggavarana,* conceals enlightenment.

   This view, said to be the view of the Nihilists, is identified as the 'definite wrong view', *Niyatha Micca Ditti*, that destines one to lower realms, i.e four states of deprivation (*sathra apaya*).

   Key beliefs of the person with a definite wrong view are,

   - No benefit in offering alms
   - No purpose in caring for parents
   - There is no merit or demerit in deeds
   - There aren't any ascetics who preach Dhamma
   - Beings do not pass from one existence to the other.
   - No spontaneous becoming i.e. becoming of gods, brahmas and hungry ghosts etc.

Nihilists believe that when the body or the material form 'dies' nothing moves to another existence, hence no rebirth.

2. The second wrong view does not obstruct Happy States (*sugathi)* but conceals enlightenment, and is known as *saggavarana novena but maggavarana Ditti* in the scripts.

Those who maintain this view (Eternalists) believe there is a continuous 'soul' (*athma)* moving from one becoming to another and correspondingly accept the opposite to those of Nihilist believers noted above.

They believe that,

- There is benefit in giving alms
- There is benefit in caring for parents
- There are merits and demerits in deeds and so on.

Buddha has said that in comparison to the previous view this is favourable as people with this view will honour righteous living knowing the merits of good deeds and evils of bad deeds in terms of future becoming, either in a Happy state or a state of deprivation.

3. The third view commonly grasped by lay believers is the Personality View or *Sakkaya Ditti*.

This is a view that does not obstruct reaching Happy States or the path to enlightenment. '*If it does obstruct, no being can attain enlightenment or reach Happy States'*, states Venerable Sudassana.

Two former views, the Nihilist and Eternalists (*Sassatha and ucceda*) are framed within the Personality view. Discarding personality view will make one free from all wrong views, satisfying a requisite to become a stream winner.

The scripts identify 20 ways of grasping personality View. i.e in four ways for the 5 aggregates (4x5=20). The four ways of holding onto Personal View can be summarised as,

1. Considering 5 aggregates as soul- e.g. Form (feeling, perception etc.) is me
2. Soul having possession of 5 aggregates - e.g. Form belong to me
3. Aggregates are in the soul- e.g. Form is within me
4. Soul is within Aggregates - e.g. I am in the form.

'We need to closely examine how we can discard wrong views, is it that we gain the Clear view or insight vision first by discarding the wrong views or is it that we gain the clear view first in order to discard the wrong views?, In other words do we remove darkness to see light or will the darkness disappear when light is lit.' The right way, stresses Ven Sudassana, is to bring light in pushing the darkness away. Darkness is the wrong view and the Light is the clear view or insight. Pursuance of the clear view is fundamental to remove wrong views and to reach the path to enlightenment.

The 'Personality' View or *Sakkaya Ditti* is also the view through which the defilements are formed.

'Personality' relating to *Sakkaya* in *pali* are also identified as the five clinging aggregates and refers to the state of arising eye contact, ear contact & nose contact etc. '*This is the state of not knowing'.*

View or *Ditti*, does not belong to the former but occurs at the mind consciousness, level. In *Abhidhamma* terms this is the state of forming *javana.* The grasping of aggregates (*skandas*) as I, me and mine occur here conforming to the formation of view.

What is 'seen' is different to what is 'known', says Ven Sudassana. *For instance ten people will see a man as the same person, at the state of eye contact, but will know him probably as 10 different people at the 'knowing' state. One will see him as a father, one as a brother, a friend, a son and so on.*

'This is our journey of moving from Unknown to Known, the cycle that we cannot avoid.'
The state of seeing (former) is not defined, *avyakruthe, as it is not* classified as having merit or de-merit.

At this point, the first thought that has arisen is already spent on the function of capturing the presence of an object; say an object with colour. This state, known as arising of 'eye consciousness' is similar to an image being reflected on a mirror, nothing more is known about it. Notwithstanding, the process never ends here but will proceed to the state of 'knowing '. The next thought arises as soon as the former ceases, deciding an object is being seen which is followed by thoughts that confirm the object, upon which the karma is formed leading to '*prapanca*'(proliferation of concepts). The above repetitive thought formation is described in the explanation of a 'thought process' in *Abhidhamma* and is a 'rule of mind' – *a Citta niyama*. As described in 'Madhupindika Sutra' it is a rule that what is seen is perceived and what is perceived is determined and contemplated on and so on.

At the state of contact, not knowing the object, judgements cannot be made as to the wholesome or unwholesome nature of it and therefore cannot form opinion based on likes and dislikes, to create defilements of greed, hatred or delusion. However, the beings are not spared from proceeding to the subsequent kamma formation state and thus there is no help within the worldly existence to evade this process. If there is any help within the worldly existences, The Eight Laws Relating to the Vicissitude of Life, *Ashta loka dharma*, will not prevail and hence no need for a Buddha to be born. The only possibility within the mundane state is to move up or down within the limits of the three existences, Sensuous, Material and Non-material, in accordance with the merits (*kusal*) and demerits (*akusal*) achieved through 'good' or 'bad' deeds. Deeds (*kamma*) with good intentions result in merit, and deeds with bad intentions result in demerit. However, there is no escape from suffering, i.e. decay and death. Buddhas emerge to self-realise this reality and to show the way out of this misery.

Results, *Vipaka*, in the sensuous world are experienced through the sensory capacity gained due to old kamma and can only process limited level of data. For e.g, the human eye can only see a limited portion of the colour spectrum which is considered as adequate to interact in this existence, *kama bhumi.* Each being experiences according to the aggregates individually formed by them in this manner. Human beings who are born in the sensuous existence are rewarded with and possess compatible senses to share the experiences of that existence as a result of doing deeds of common nature, previously.

If we are happy with the capacity of our senses there is no change and thus we will continue to dwell & experience what is offered in this existence.

Beings in the material existence rejects pleasures in the sensuous world and those in the In-material existence reject the pleasures in the material world. An Arhat is the one who rejects all, who has moved beyond the worldly existences.

As Buddha has said *Intention (Chetana)* is the kamma and if ones wish is to own a bunch of aggregates similar to what you have now in the next existence that's what you will get and the resultant experiences will not be different to what you have now. i.e. Suffering!

Meditation helps to elevate the sensory capacity to a superior level.

If one begins to meditate on the Form as a thing composed of four great elements he will be able to release his attachments to form, to a degree. As he proceeds, he will not identify things or persons strictly by accepted norms, say as house, car or as father, brother, son etc. This will be beneficial to some extent, and will acquire merits. The drawback in this approach, in terms of absolute liberation, is that he has already determined the form before he decide to explore it, for e.g. the body is recognised before meditating on it as a thing composed of hair, nails flesh etc. The error has been already been made here in accepting the form before beginning to meditate.

On the other hand if one begins to see the Form, with insight, only as an image formed in the mind, he will begin to identify name aspect in the name-matter composition rather than matter alone. Pursuing his view in this manner, the way he sees will gradually change and his vision will be cleared influencing the result, *vipaka*. The notion that the object seen is the one definitely present out there will fade away and he will not continue to grasp the name-matter form, produced by contact. He realises that feeling, perception and formation belong to the mind and not to the object, he sees that when name - matter separate, mind and mental factors (*citta*and *chaithasiks)* cease - the aggregates cease to exist, hence*, anathma*. There is nothing to hold onto, to remember or to come back in search of. Now, as the intention changes the result change as well, to experience beyond the worldly state, at a supermundane state. His sensory capacities are elevated to make him free of the mundane existence towards complete liberation, ultimately to a state of bliss. No more suffering, or decay and death.

Ditthiñca anupagamma silava
Dassanena sampanno
Kamesu vineyya gedham
Na hi jatu gabbhaseyyam punar eti'ti
Karaneeya metta Sutra

The one with a moral conduct free from wrong views
And, with a clear vision (insight)
Can discard sense desires
The one who does so will not return to a womb (will not be reborn)

One needs to eliminate all wrong views to achieve clear view, *dittinca anupagamma,* in its efforts to discard craving and be free from sensuous existences.

Notwithstanding, the one with the moral conduct falling short of the full insight will not discard craving. He may suppress it temporarily but will come back again. One who does with a vision, without erroneous views, will not return, will be *anagami, or arhat.*

As the view gets clearer he will not see self in aggregates or will not see self as one associating aggregates.

Gaining clear view in this manner and discarding wrong views is, ‘understanding the things as they are in the world’ - the *yathabutha nana dassana*.

4 THE BEAUTY IS IN THE MIND OF THE BEHOLDER

Sensuality

With reference to the sensuality or *Kama,* the teachings make reference to the following,

Kāmā bhikkhave veditabbā,	Sensuality should be known
kāmānam nidānasambhavo veditabbo	The cause for sensuality should be known
kāmānam vemattatā veditabbā	The diversity in sensuality should be known
kāmānam vipāko veditabbo	The result of sensuality should be known
kāmanirodho veditabbo	The cessation of sensuality should be known
kāmanirodhagāminīpaṭipadā veditabbā.	The path for the cessation of sensuality should be known

Nibbhedika Sutra

The Buddha has identified five attributes of Sensuality which are,

1. Forms seen by eye- Pleasing, Charming, endearing & fostering Desire ,
2. Forms heard by ear- Pleasing, Charming, endearing & fostering Desire ,
3. Forms smelt by nose- Pleasing, Charming, endearing & fostering Desire ,
4. Forms tasted by tongue- Pleasing, Charming, endearing & fostering Desire ,
5. Forms felt by the body (tactile)- Pleasing, Charming, endearing & fostering Desire ,

'These are pleasures in the world but they are attributes of sensuality in the discipline of the noble ones' he has stressed.

Sensuality is categorised into two in the worldly sense,

a) Objects of sensuality - *Wastu kama* , which are those that are seen heard smelt, tasted or touched, e.g. house, car etc.
b) Defilement of Sensuality- *Klesha Kama*- i.e. Lust or passion in our mind associating Objects of sensuality.

One can liberate from objects of sensuality but can still possess affection or longing to them. When objects of sensuality are present defilements are formed on them, in other words where *wastu kama* is there is *klesha kama*.

Ven. Sudassana relates these two to Mud (*wastu kama*) and the smell of mud (klesha *kama).*
'Where Mud is smell of mud is present. *One can keep away from Mud to avoid its smell but it is impossible to discard smell while associating mud.'*

'Only a place free of both mud and smell can be considered as clean', he says.

A recluse can keep away from objects of sensuality but may not refrain from the defilements formed in his mind in respect of sensuous objects, as he may still keep thinking about sensual objects through defilements still remain in his mind in respect of those.

One can be free of sensuality temporarily (at *thadanga* level); however the hidden lust for pleasures could spring up again when the conditions are present.

By reaching *Dyana* states one can refrain from defilements of sensuality to a greater extent (*vishkambana* level) and could even suppress it for eons, however, will return to sensuous existences eventually.

Complete eradication (*samucceda*) of sensuality is only achieved through Enlightenment, if not, the defilements of sensuality arise again similar to growth of shoots on a tree trunk even when it's branches are completely lopped off. The lust for sensual pleasures that may remain dormant (*anusaya*) will arise again.

Both, objects of sensuality and defilements on them should be removed completely with no remainder left as dormant for the ultimate liberation.

Sensuality and Beauty

Elaborating on the state of sensuality Buddha has further preached,

Saṅkappa-rāgo purisassa kāmo,
Nete kāmā yāni citrāni loke;
Tiṭṭhanti citrāni tatheva loke;
Athettha dhīrā vinayanti chandan.

Man's sensuality is his lustful conceptions,
sensual pleasures are not in beauty of the world.
The beauties remain as they are in the world,
The wise, subdue their desire, in this regard.

Things of beauty in the world become sensuous due to man's lustful conceptions. The beauty exists in this world as they are; they do not possess any sensuality that man associates with. The wise are not affected by them.

'If things of beauty themselves are sensuous, will the Arhats be spared? 'questions, Ven. Sudassana. '*We create the sensuous world within us and associate it as we wish.'* What is considered as pleasurable in this world are not so for the enlightened ones.

Now we need to examine how we create sensuality. We assume that sensuality exists in things we see, hear and smell etc. and we get attracted to such objects.

We also need to examine how objects of sensuality become defilements of sensuality. It is due to the way we contemplate on things that we interact with, and our inclination towards them. The cause for this is that we do not see things as they are, i.e. ignorance. We keep contemplating on what we see, hear etc. to develop passion or affection. We look at a form made of four elements, say a person, and call it a man or woman. Similarly we form things as house car etc. in our mind.

Our inclination to what we see, hear or smell is lust, *raga*. Our attention and inclinations to objects result in formation of sensuality. Objects of sensuality come to be when we take notice of objects and we form defilements on them due to our contemplation and inclination to it.

1. Cause for Sensuality

Sensuality is formed due to contact. When an object is present in front of the eye, sensuality comes into play due to our attention upon the object**.** Defilements on them are formed due to our inclination to them at the state of knowing, *Vinnana*. The eye contact arises only when there is inclination to the object seen and defilements are formed at this point. These defilements are further fuelled by mind consciousness, knowing as son, daughter etc. This is 'becoming', the birth attached to decay and death.

Buddhist scripts identify several similes to understand how sensuality is formed,
For instance, when a dog eats a bone its gums get pierced by splinters of the bone that it bites, causing bleeding. The dog loves the taste of blood but thinks the taste is coming from the bone and thus it bites into the bone more and more, enjoying his own blood. Similarly a person who is caught up in sensual pleasures is deceived of the evil effects attached to it and the suffering it brings upon, *'similar to an iron rod being corroded by the rust formed on it by itself'.*

The Buddha has said 'No one in this world is satiable with sensual pleasures.'

2. Diversity of Sensuality

Sensuality is diverse and is distinguished by the sense door it relates to, for instance sensuality with regard to forms is one thing and sensuality with regard to sound is another and so on, in respect of each sense base.

3. Result of Sensuality

When we develop a liking to something we usually end up clinging to that assuring corresponding state of our existence in accordance with merits and demerits. As we

continue to cling to a thing or a person that seem to exist externally, it develops the sense of personality, the notion of 'me' (*asmi mana), ego-conceit.*

The personality or the self (*atma*) is fed by sensuality. As long as you associate pleasures the man is present, embracing body as me and eventually establishing the 'self' view. When we cling to sensuality, the more you have pleasure, more you cling and get attached further boosting the notion of 'self' and existence.

4. Cessation of Sensuality

If you end contact- sensuality will cease. If you avoid paying much attention to what you encounter, you will avoid contact and thus the origination of sensuality.

5. Path to Cessation of Sensuality

The path to refrain from contemplating or associating sensuality is the Noble Eightfold Path which lead to the cessation of sensuality. Gaining the Right View is fundamental to pursue the Noble Eightfold path. With the Right View you will contemplate on what is actually present out there, not on the object that appears to be there. It is attaining *Yatha butha nana dassana.*

The Mirage Simile

Consider the simile of the mirage where the man is not deceived while the beast is; Water is the sensual object to the beast which generates its passion to that.

Notwithstanding, we make the same error in forming objects of sensuality and developing inclination to it in our worldly associations. The awareness we had in the former situation is not present during our worldly associations. Being deceived we create both objects of sensuality and defilements of sensuality in the process.

Through our wise attention we know that what is an object of sensuality (water) to the beast is a mental image for us. If we can practice contemplating with Right View as we do in the Mirage situation this vision gradually becomes the reality of our lives, enabling us to liberate from objects of sensuality.

5 THE LAW OF KAMMA AND LIBERATION

According to Theravada Buddhism *Kammassakata Samma ditthi* (Right View at the mundane state) is highly regarded for the progress of human character. This is the view that any conscious action or kamma can produce good or bad results

It's literal name is the right view of the ownership of action, and it finds its standard formulation in the following,

Sabbe Satta Kammasaka	Beings are the owners of their actions
Kamma dayada	The heirs of their actions
Kamma yoni	Beings are the descendants of their own kamma
Kamma bandhu	Kamma alone is one's real friend
Kamma patisarana	Kamma alone is the real Refuge of all beings

It denotes that whatever deeds we do, good or bad, of those we shall be the heirs. The belief affirms that virtuous action has moral significance, that good and bad deeds produce corresponding fruits.

It is also said that Kamma is the law of cause and effect in the ethical realm. The understanding of the law of Kamma helps one to have self-reliance and responsibility. According to Buddhism, good result comes naturally from good deeds and bad result comes from wrong deeds. Such phenomena can be called moral doctrines. Indeed, one's own good will play the main role in every action he does. This is what Kammassakata Samma ditthi means.

Nevertheless, do we have a permanent liberation from this law of kamma?

Our deeds or Kamma has the characteristic of causing consequences (*vipaka*). Kamma occur due to ignorance, it is a function of ignorance. The ignorance is, not seeing the things as they are or in other words not knowing the arising ceasing nature of five clinging aggregates. The extent of gaining merits and demerits is subject to deeds done, either wholesome or unwholesome, which is determined by the state of ignorance.

According to the Dependant origination process, formation of Kamma has its consequences in formation of rebirth consciousness. Rebirth consciousness takes possession of a form, hence the resultant Name-Matter inherit the properties of consciousness. In the process of formation of Name-Matter the mind (consciousness) is spent on the function itself.

The Six sense bases are formed by Name –Matter and therefore, it can be concluded that the sense bases are formed in relation to the properties of kamma, in form of *karmaja rupa* (forms derived from deeds). Once the sense bases are formed one is not free from developing further kamma in account of experiencing or feeling as pleasant or unpleasant, as conditioned by the contact.

There are no designated places that exist as hell and heaven. The existence or *Bhava* is formed by oneself in accordance to the faculty of sense bases that arise as determined by his previous deeds (kamma). Therefore, **the existence or the world formed around you is determined by none other than your own deeds, kamma is the refuge and hence no friend or relative can help**.

Capturing the shapes as form is the ability of the eye. We crave and cling to the resultant product of the eye contact based on our likes and dislikes to it through thought, speech and action. In accordance with the Dependent Origination cycle, craving and clinging leads to formation of *Bhava* or existence. This process occurs in the mind due to ignorance; not knowing what is seen is not what is out there. The Dependent origination theory further defines that ignorance is connected to or endowed with formation or *sanskara.*

The aggregates arise and cease but sanskaras (kamma) are formed due to ignorance, corresponding to the likes and dislikes, generating craving and clinging that result in forming the existence (*Bhava*). The sense of being present or existent is identified as *Bhava*. The act of seeing is due to old kamma as said before, due to formation of sense bases as a consequence of previous kamma. The ignorance that was instrumental in creating kamma and the resultant craving & clinging in the past come into play again at the present generating craving and clinging on our formations (*Sanskaras*) expressed through thought, speech and action, promising the next existence that lead to another becoming.

The Dependent Origination theory demonstrate this occurrence from the point of moving from one object to the other (*arammana* to *arammana*), as it occurs at both momentary and continuum (*Ekshanika & santhathi*) states. When one recognises arising and ceasing nature of sense bases as discussed above with insight, he overcomes ignorance, hence, no further kamma formations and therefore, no craving or clinging to form a B*hava*.

As the sense bases arise due to old kamma the aggregates can also be considered as derivations of old kamma. If there is no clinging an existence will not be formed today and hence, no future becoming. The whole process is determined by kamma driven by ignorance.

"*We are preoccupied with what we create around us that we do not make any attempt to escape from the misery we are in. The external world is a void but we just assume it is out there. We dwell in the existence we form. Belief of everything exist is ignorance and hence the formation of kamma, craving and clinging*."

"*We make our own prison and dwell within, without making any effort to escape from it, I call it the Universal Prison*", says Venerable Sudassana.

Seeing a heap of sand is what eye creates (due to ignorance) for us to experience, where sand particles are grouped in a particular manner. The heap of sand did not exist before or after but was created by the eye as we looked through the eye. This is how we feel that things exist and due to this delusion we think, speak and act, generating craving in the process according to the state of kamma. Tranquillity (*Samatha)* meditation helps to cultivate concentration which is central to gain insight.

One should learn to see insight through any object. Think of a friend who we think is there. Who is he? It is a form created by aggregates or edible food. One should practice to see beyond the form or the object in this manner and do this back and forth. He should lean to experience that things only occur in the mind and realise that the world is created within. This is the state of not being deluded by a Mirage, the state that should become his life, the state of *Anagami*.

Liberation is *bhava nirodha* with some old kamma still remaining. This is the state of realising the truth, as preached by Buddha, "Y*an kinci samudaya dhammam sabbantham nirodha dhammam",* 'whatever that arises due to causes all that are subject to cessation". The one, who reaches this state of enlightenment with some remnants of aggregates (*sopadishesha nirvana)*, holds nothing before or after the act of seeing, hearing smelling etc., until his final attainment of full enlightenment (*Anupadhishesha nirvana*) with the cessation of the remaining aggregates.

6 'IN THE SEEN WILL BE MERELY WHAT IS SEEN'

'DITTE DITTA MATTAN BAVISSATI'

The form that impinge on the eye is made of Four Great Elements known as *Sathara Mahabhutha* . These Elements or *Mahabhutha* do not pose as they are but appear in disguise hence are called 'Bhutha', meaning 'spirit'. What is seen by the eye is described in the script as '*Upadaya Rupa*' meaning, a shape formed by the Four Great elements when conditions are present. An example given is the image (or shadow) falling on water when one looks into a pond. We cannot interact with this image by touching or smelling and it appears when we look into the water and disappears when we move away. If we try to touch it we will feel the water but not the image. There is no difference to this experience, it is said, to what we experience in our day to day encounters with external objects. The dilemma is that we tend to tie such a visual experience to an experience from another sense door, such as smell, taste, touch etc., which in reality occur in isolation of each other. By tying one experience to the others we compose a person or a thing in our mind as one that exist permanently out there and hence we come back in search of him/it to experience or re-cognise (forming *prathisandhi vinnana* or Re-link consciousness).

This can be compared with conventional film making where visual footage is shot first and voices and music dubbed soon after to create a motion picture. A mental impression of our experiences through any of the sense doors is sufficient to make us comeback in search of the object (image) to which it is attached to (in our mind) and when seen again the film (or the video) is played back experiencing through several senses. This is how we are trapped in this *samsaric* existence.

Furthermore, according to the teachings, consciousness that arises in the visual experience, *chakku Vinnana*, is different to the consciousness that arise through an experience from ear, nose, tongue or body. Therefore, the experiences from two or more sense bases are distinct by nature and hence cannot be identified with one object.

The Buddha identified this error and preached to refrain from tying experience from one sense door to another. In his response to a request from an ascetic named Bahiya to teach dhamma, the enlightened one simply advised,

"***Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: in the seen will be merely what is seen; in the heard will be merely what is heard; in the sensed will be merely what is sensed; in the cognised will be merely what is cognised****. "(Translation John D Ireland, 1998)*

"Ditte Ditta Mattan Bhavissathi ,
Suthe Sutha Mattam Bhavissathi,
Muthe Mutha Mattam Bhavissathi,
Vinnate Vinnatha mattam Bhavissathi"
Bahiya Sutta
It is said that Bhahiya became an Arhat having listened to this sermon.

The meaning of this profound statement in simple terms is, do not combine an experience from the eye, for instance, to another as they arise within each sense base and cease from within without any interconnection.

In a similar manner we also confuse visual appearance of sense bases with their actual function. The Buddha has said that we cannot see our sense bases (*anidassana)*. Though we identify them as eye, ear, nose, tongue or the body, the sense bases are identified by their function rather than the physical appearance. Being ignorant of the function of each in contact, for instance we combine the visual appearance of the ear to the function of hearing.

This can be explained with a simple experiment. If you prick your tongue with a pin the resultant sensation is due to arising of the body consciousness and not the tongue consciousness as it meant to be.

When there is a pain in the leg as long as you grasp it as a leg pain it will prevail. The truth is that the sensation/pain felt due to arising of body consciousness is tied to the eye consciousness and grasped it as a pain occurring in the leg. In this instance the body consciousness arises and ceases momentarily corresponding to the arising and ceasing of the body contact. However, we do not feel the gap in between (the moment without any pain) as the sensation (pain) is retrieved by the mind as mind consciousness in bridging the gap, hence, we feel a continuous pain. Now as we attach the body pain to the visual experience we complain of suffering from leg pain.

Observing this reality with insight helps to separate the experiences sensed through different sense doors lessening the power of defilements. The realisation that an experience from each sense door arises due to conditions and cease when the conditions are not present is central to the above.

Take an example of you being accused by someone, you usually get hurt in such situations and often react, as you can connect what you heard to the person seen. If the person is someone you hate the reaction is multiplied. However, if you just consider what you heard as just a voice you will not feel hurt. Learning from the teachings we should consider it as something just heard without connecting to a person and moreover, if there is no listener there is no one to be hurt.

It is also said that what we experience in dreams are identical to what we associate while we are awake in terms of responding to mere mental images (nothing that exist externally) due to ignorance. The difference is that when we wake up from sleep we know that the dream was unreal but while being awake we continue to be deceived. The Buddha who is called the 'Awakened One' realised that it is a dream in both states and declared that our affection to sensual pleasures are a dream itself, '*swapnopaka kama*'.

7 DEPART AS THE FLAME OF A LAMP

Beings are not born to a world that exists, it is said that each one forms its own existence (or world) by perceiving through sense bases gained as a result of previous karma. There aren't things that exist externally as we believe there are, but we create the world in our mind according to our likes and dislikes and interact accordingly with it.

One should not believe that he or she uses the sense bases that exist, similarly, one should not believe that the sense bases that he or she has used exist thereafter. They arise in the presence of objects and cease when there is no contact. Do not 'see' things as they exist out there permanently, do not think that you leave things behind as what you have seen, heard, tasted etc. as it will make you to come back seeking them. If one continues to seek what he or she experienced, either as seen or heard, it is due to the wrongful notion of permanence in compounded things.

The Buddha urged to dwell within and to 'let go' the external, *loka nirodha*.

Birth or jathi is defined as becoming of the aggregates and being rewarded with sense bases in relevant existences due to previous kamma. The Eye cannot be seen, '*anidassana*'. It's known by its function only - The faculty of the 'eye'. It arises when it meets an object formed by the four great elements, and ceases when there is no more contact. When the two are in the presence of each other the eye cognition occurs. There is no new kamma formed at this point. What is known as 'seeing' here is regulated by the eye faculty which is determined by previous kamma. The role of eye in this context is dependent on factors including the presence of external objects and in the same way, an external object cannot be 'seen without the eye that has arisen. The two sense bases are interdependent in this instance. The function of seeing proceeds with eye cognition resulting in 'eye contact' which gives rise to feeling followed by, perceiving and ending up with the 'formation' (of Kamma). The same applies to other senses such as ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.

In *Madhupindika Sutra*, Arahath Maha Kaccayana discloses this Dhamma and goes on to say that *Chetana* or *kamma* formation itself leads to conceptual proliferation (*prapanca*) which is also defined as development of craving, wrong view and ego that fuel the process of the dependant origination cycle. He further states that when the eye and the external object are not in contact there is no eye consciousness and therefore no 'eye contact'. When there is no eye contact no means of perception or karma formation leading to '*prapanca*'. The realisation of the act of 'seeing' as a mental process through insight meditation, identifying what is seen is not an object that exist externally, but an image formed in the mind by the great elements present out there, develops the Right View which is paramount in breaking this cycle of re-birth.

When a Deer spots a mirage in the desert he sees it as water and runs towards it to quench his thirst. The Deer never finds water there but looking around sees the same illusion elsewhere and keeps running back & forth in the desert being deluded. However, the wise man who sees the same mirage will not be deluded as he knows it's a mere illusion captured by the eye due to external properties & conditions. Knowing this he will not seek water in a

desert plane as he has eradicated the notion of presence of water from its inception with the knowledge that it just occurs in his mind. However, in the same way the Deer who is ignorant is deluded in this instance, the ignorant man is deluded when interacting with worldly objects, developing likes and dislikes on what is presented through his sense doors. The resultant contemplation on these feelings makes him run in search of them similar to the Deer in the desert. The Right View helps one to see things as they really are and develops knowledge to perceive things as he does in the instance of seeing a mirage. Living his life in this manner liberates his mind from being deluded from form and makes him a non- seeker, ultimately reaching the state of a non–returner, *anagaami*.

Those who have committed kamma to experience (results) in sensuous world (Kama loka) gain necessary eye faculty that permits experiences in that existence. The faculties of beings of higher celestial planes, it is said, are superior and enable them to see finer objects than us. On the other hand the animals and beings of the lower realms possess faculties inferior to us therefore are attracted to things that we reject (e.g. Pigs). Similarly, what humans uphold as wholesome & pleasant are not appealing to the beings of higher realms. If one can change kamma the resultant eye faculty could be changed. If the faculty get elevated, a being can experience the pleasures of the relevant higher celestial planes, but if lowered the being will be exposed to sufferings in the lower realms.

It is said that some hungry ghosts (*prethas*) see (and smell) water as blood or puss due to degradation of the eye faculty as a consequence of previous kamma and hence are unable to satisfy their thirsts. When the capacity or faculty of senses are elevated, through dhyanas for e.g., one can experience the pleasures of higher celestial planes such as Fine – Material World (*Rupa Loka*) or immaterial World (*Arupa Loka*). When the senses are utilised wisely with Right View the sense faculties could be gradually modified to achieve complete release of any attachments to external objects, thereby, ending the occurrence of rebirth consciousness. Pursuing this View further with Right intention, effort, livelihood, mindfulness and concentration (The Noble Eight Fold Path) makes one completely liberated.

Khīnam purānam
navam natthi sambhavam
Viratta cittā āyatike bhavasmim
Te khīnabījā avirūlhicchandā
Nibbanti dhīrā yathā'yam padīpo

-Rathana Sutra

The sense bases that came to be due to old kamma are no more. No new kammas formed, hence, sense bases are not formed anymore – the mind is free from becoming, *jathi* ; the seed of re- birth consciousness has exhausted. So does the (wise) one with strength cease to exist as the flame of an oil lamp go out.

He sees that things are in a transitionary nature and arise within his self and ceases from within. Sense bases arise and cease and are not permanent. No more ignorance as he sees

things as they are, i.e. what you experience is what you form in your mind by what you see hear, smell etc. and are not what exists out there. *Avidya nirodho*.

No *sankaras* are formed as he knows that things that are compound (and that are not present before) arise due to conditions and cease when the conditions are not present, nothing exists afterwards. *Sankara nirodho*, he realises that what is seen - does not exist, what is heard - does not exist. There for *vinnana nirodho*. He has eradicated the reasons to re-cognise (*prathi-sandi*), hence **the life ends like the flame of an oil lamp which depart when the oil and the wick run out**. Consequently, no more re-birth and any further suffering.

8 IMPERMANANCE AND THE THREE MARKS OF BUDDHISM

The Buddha identified the three characteristics or the Three Marks of phenomenon *(Thri Lakkhana*), impermanence, suffering and selflessness (egolessness), as doorways to liberation (*Vimukthi Mukha*). This philosophy is only found in Buddhist teachings and is beyond the common understanding of the world for instance, the notion of impermanence.

The reality of impermanence is misconceived in the world as it recognises it as impermanence of a permanent thing or being. A piece of furniture, for e.g. a table, is considered as an item that is subject to the phenomenon of 'Impermanence', similarly a car or a person. The error as seen from the point of view of Buddha's teaching here is that the thing or the person is first recognised as something that exists permanently before its nature of impermanence, in the worldly sense, is taken into consideration.

One can contemplate on 'impermanence' in this manner; however, will never be able to see it by himself, which is fundamental to Buddhist realisation. Note here that the person is already deceived by the Distortions (*vipallasa)*, through perception, mind, and view, in recognising the object before attention is focused on the impermanent nature of the object. Contemplating in this manner will help to an extent in acquiring merits and reducing the defilements of greed and aversion, nevertheless, the being is not free from forming Kamma, as Merit itself is considered as forming kamma (*punyabhi sankhara)*.

The Buddha urged to see beyond the form as a product that is formed due to combination of factors, as a result of the cause and effect phenomenon. He pointed to the transitory nature of form and stressed the importance of observing the arising and ceasing phenomenon to recognise its impermanent nature. By pursuing in this manner through insight meditation, it is said, one can realise that things do not exist before or after the occurrence of 'seeing' but arise to the occasion when conditions are present and cease thereafter when conditions cease to exist. This is referred to as *pubbanta nana* (knowledge that things didn't exist before) and *aparata nana* (knowledge that things do not exist after), knowing both and seeing it's arising and ceasing nature at the present is known as *pubbanta-aparanta nana*. When the above is known one is considered as knowing the Dependant Origination occurrence (*Paticcasamuppada Nana*). Realising the arising ceasing nature of form completely eradicate ignorance. When one is free from ignorance there is no more craving or clinging, thus no 'existence' (*bhava*) . When he is freed from existence he is free from becoming or *jati* and hence, decay and death and so on, that is defined as suffering.

It is also said that impermanence leads to suffering, *Yadaniccan tan dukkan*. This is due to the notion of permanence grasped by the worldly beings. When the reality is not known the man believes that the things they form in mind, *sanskaras*, in relation to external objects exist permanently. He is ignorant of the transitory nature of compounded things and thus clings to the impressions formed in mind as those which exist permanently out there. Due to the fact that the mental impression is formed by himself in his own mind it lingers in his

memory, grasping as man, woman or car etc. This is the view with which we lay people interact in this world accumulating karma in the process. The suffering occurs when the external objects which are subject to transformation appear different to the mental impressions that he has grasped as things or persons that are permanent. When he realises the error and overcomes his ignorance through the Right View, he is not deceived anymore and hence eliminate craving & clinging, the cause for suffering. It is further said that anything that end in suffering cannot be considered as 'me or mine' and hence, *Anatma (selfless)*, *Yan Dukkan Tadanatta*. Through the Right View one will see the three characteristics of phenomena, Impermanence, Suffering and Selflessness.

The Simile of the Mirror Image,

When we stand in front of the mirror we know that the image formed on it arises as we look into the mirror, due to the presence of several factors, i.e. Mirror, our body and light. We also know that the image disappear when we move away from the mirror. We do not grasp the mirror image as a thing that exists permanently. If one can meditate on that occurrence alone it will help him to develop his skills and to remove his delusion in day to day encounters establishing the impermanent nature of all things. He will know that the eye, the object and eye consciousness are all impermanent and just arise instantaneously and cease thereafter. He will see the void in what he used to cling onto as things that exist permanently, like the image falling on the mirror.

9 LIBERATION FROM SUFFERING

The Buddha to be Prince Sidhartha was disturbed by his encounters with a sick person, old person, a dead body and a monk, experiencing for the first time the unsatisfactory nature of life resulting in his great renunciation. Through his enlightened mind the Buddha recognised suffering in birth, decay and death, grief , despair, lamentation etc. and claimed that in short the five clinging aggregates are 'suffering'. In other words he said that association of the **five clinging aggregates** are suffering.

With his unprecedented wisdom, Buddha identified the four noble truths in existences which were taught as.

- Suffering (*Dukkha*).
- Cause for Suffering (*Dukkha Samudaya*),
- Cessation of suffering *(Dukkha Nirodhaya*), and
- The path to cease suffering. (*Dukkha Nirodha Gamini Patipada*).

Cause for suffering he said was due to craving; however, he did not preach to cease craving as the fourth truth. Instead, he showed a path and stressed that the one who follows it will reach cessation of suffering, i.e. attaining *Nirvana*, by discarding craving. The Noble Eight fold Path was declared as the Right View, the Right thought, the Right speech and so on, where gaining Right view is considered as the forerunner in achieving the rest. The Right View is described in the script as knowing the four noble truths, i.e, knowing suffering, cause for suffering and so on. In accordance with the definition of suffering discussed above, the Right view is, knowing the five clinging aggregates, the cause for it, cessation of it and the path to the cessation of the five clinging aggregates.

In his Dependent Origination doctrine, The Buddha identified ignorance as the primary cause that trigger the cycle of cause and effect phenomenon leading to suffering, i.e. birth, decay, death and so on. Ignorance is identified in the script as not knowing the four noble truths. In other words it is having the wrong view of not knowing the five clinging aggregates, the cause for it, cessation of it and the path to the cessation of the five clinging aggregates.

The Buddha further elaborated on the ignorance as not knowing the arising ceasing nature of compounded things due to conditions, or the true reality of the world, i.e. The things that are not present before arise due to conditions and cease when the conditions are not present.

He further said that to gain the Right View or to overcome ignorance, one need to observe the transitory nature of things or aggregates and by observing this reality one will realise that the things that are not present before arise due to conditions and cease without leaving anything behind. This is gaining the Right View by removing ignorance or arising of true 'science' or '*Vidya', as* claimed by the Buddha. It brings to light the understanding of the

Four Noble Truths setting in motion the path to cessation of suffering as the **Noble Eightfold Path**.

Worldly belief is that things exist permanently and we see what is out there when we look at them, (similarly with sound and smell etc), however, when one with the Right View, pursues on the Eightfold path through the Right thought, Right speech, Right Effort, Right Livelihood, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration, his notion of permanence, or what is seen exists before and remain afterwards, begins to fade away. His craving and clinging to compounded things will gradually be released as he begins to realise that nothing exists but arise instantaneously when the conditions are present and cease when the conditions separate. Realisation of impermanence in this manner conforms to the noble practice and is beyond the mundane understanding of impermanence of things that are already accepted as those permanently exist. The common understanding in the world is that the forms that exist in the world are subject to change and hence are impermanent. An analogy considered in this regard is that a person cannot step into the same river twice as both the water and the man are constantly changing. Meanwhile, the scientists concentrate on the behaviour of matter in order to determine the formation of things that exist externally. They have been able to observe that things we see are manifestations of wave forms and hence are subject to constant change. This is claimed as evidence for the theory of impermanence.

In contrary to focusing on the things that are external, Buddhist teachings urge to observe from within, drawing attention to the formations in mind in relation to external objects due to ignorance. It focuses on the mental impressions left behind by these formations which we grasp in accordance with our likes and dislikes as those that exist permanently. The craving and clinging we develop on these impressions forms our existence (*bhava*) and hence future becoming. The Buddha urged us to cease the existence (*bhava nirodha*) or in other words to cease the world created within us. He preached to observe the arising and ceasing nature of the aggregates being subject to the phenomenon of cause and effect, to establish the reality of impermanence of things grasped in our minds. He proclaimed that by gaining the above vision removing ignorance is the key to discard craving and clinging which are instrumental in forming existence.

In depth understanding of the Dependent Origination theory is essential to identify the above phenomena. The Dependent origination theory as we have learnt is the cycle of cause and effect consisting of twelve links known as, Ignorance, Formation, Consciousness, Name-Matter, Six Sense Bases, Contact, Feeling, Craving, Clinging, Existence & Becoming leading to Decay & Death (Avidya, Sanskara, Vinnana, Namarupa , Salayathana, Passa Vedana, Thanha, Upadana,Bhava, Jathi & Jara Marana, etc)

The order in which we are made to understand this process so far is that due to our previous ignorance we are in this existence, being subject to the process of contacting and feeling, thus generating craving and clinging which form our next existence. In accordance to this understanding of the dependent origination there is no opportunity to liberate in this existence as ignorance is said to have occurred at a previous existence, claims Venerable Sudassana.

The Venerable points to the error that had been occurring in understanding the process in that manner and explain it from another perspective, where ignorance being the primary cause for becoming that influence the Dependent Origination process at the level of seeing hearing etc. in the present (as well as in the past). He stresses that there aren't any defilements in this state, however, the resultant Kamma formation that come into play leave traces or impressions (in memory) of what is experienced, even after the occurrence has ceased thus making way for craving and clinging. We associate the world through these mental impressions (images) to which we make reference to each time we encounter an object. Our craving and clinging arise from these impressions we have created in respect of the external elements, grasping as person, a thing etc. **thus forming the five Clinging Aggregates** corresponding to aggregates of form, feeling, perception, formation and knowing.

The suffering results due to grasping as a person or a thing which occur due to ignorance. As aggregates have already ceased and what we grasp are mental impressions taken as person or thing (clinging aggregates) our defilements are formed on the erroneous mental constructions rather than on the aggregates. As we associate the world with these erroneous fabrications , when the external objects deteriorate due to natural causes, we suffer, considering the persons (we have constructed in our mind) has decayed or deceased, or has departed. Hence the Buddha preached the **five clinging aggregates (*pancaupadanskanda*) are suffering**.

The difference between an enlightened person and us lay people is that they interact and associate with the pure aggregates but we, with the mental impressions (defilements) or the clinging aggregates (*upadanaskanda)*.

Clinging leads to formation of existence (*bhava*) and therefore, becoming (*Jathi*), hence, the repetition of the Dependent origination cycle by arising of re-birth (or re-link) consciousness, Name-Matter and Six Sense Bases, leading to contact and feeling, referred to as the five elements of contact. This is the state of the worldly existence of kamma formation that sets off craving & clinging repeatedly, forming existences and causing rebirth. Now we recognise two trigger points in the process of the Dependent Origination, i.e, ignorance being the determinant of Kamma formation and Craving in forming an existence to confirm future becoming. The teachings urge to remove ignorance (by gaining the Right View) rather than directly confronting craving, the cause for suffering, hence, the point that enables us to act on to end this cycle is the state of kamma formation. We recognise that if we do not carry impressions of what is erroneously formed by the mind there is nothing to hold on to, nothing to crave for or cling to thus no more existence or becoming!

By observing the aggregates through the Right View and analysing the form, one will realise the impermanence of aggregates and hence, the error in our mental formations.

When the form is not known as it is, the defilements arise and due to defilements our view in turn gets hindered, concealing the reality of the transitory nature of aggregates.

Buddha's teaching was to see the form as it is, as a form created by the eye where a number of elements are grouped in a particular order. A form that is created when hair, flesh and bones etc. are grouped is identified as a person. Similarity is drawn in the script, between the above and perceiving a chariot, where a chassis, wheels, a cabin etc. are grouped in a particular manner. Another simple comparison is with perceiving a table where few pieces of word are arranged in a particular order. This is further discussed below through a clay pot example.

If one is to contemplate further he can observe the transitory nature of the form, i.e. arising of the form and cessation of the form (*Ithi Rupam, Ithi Rupassa samudayo, ithi Rupassa Attangamao)* as revealed by Buddha. The four Great Elements that pose in conjunction with other factors are captured by the eye as forms. When the factors or conditions are not present the form ceases. The resultant aggregates, feeling, perception etc. arise and cease correspondingly and the act of seen or heard is completed. Now he sees that the objects do not exist permanently and what we seem to grasp are our own mental fabrications. He further sees the void in responding to the nonexistent feelings through greed or aversion and therefore, he sees nothing remain to crave for or cling to and to form a future existence that would lead to further becoming.

When craving and clinging fades away by meditating in that manner he would not associate the object with the personality view, no more grasping as mother child, friend etc. or as permanent things that exist, gold silver, car etc. and therefore, cause for suffering (craving) is eradicated, with no further suffering, he is liberated from **suffering due to the five clinging aggregates**, *Dukkha Nirodha*.

<u>Example of the Clay Pot.</u>

By arranging a lump of clay into a shape a pan is formed. Consequently, the item is identified by its shape, as a pan, rather than from what it is formed of. When the same pan is crushed and remodelled into a different shape it will be called as the intended shape for eg. as a pot or even an elephant. On each occasion attention move from one shape to the other in perceiving or identifying as different objects. If all these are crushed and spread on the floor a layer of clay will be seen which is identified as clay but in other instances attention was just on the shape failing to move beyond, thus ignoring the reality of 'an object is seen where clay is formed in a certain manner'. Similarly, when a different group of matter is arranged, for instance in a denser order, it may be identified as a Gem or Diamond, adding a value for the difference in appearance. It is now evident that what we grasp as mental impressions are the shapes and not the aggregates that the objects are made of.

Recognising how we are deceived in this manner is the key to gain the Right View by discarding wrong views, which in the instance discussed earlier is the personality view due to grasping as a person (*Attavada upadana*) and grasping as pleasurable items in the latter (*Kama upadana*). The Buddha said, it is due to clinging that one determines its next existence, that lead to becoming. It is important to note here that craving or clinging occurs on the distorted view and not on the aggregates, hence the formation of Clinging aggregates *upadanaskanda*. Therefore we can come to a conclusion that clinging aggregates result due

to grasping as person or things and removing such grasping will release us from suffering due to clinging aggregates.

When craving is completely eradicated by perusing along the Noble Eightfold Path, he sees things as they are and therefore not grasping anything as impressions of kamma sanskara, the cause for becoming. This is the state of liberation, or reaching *sopadishesha nirvana*, attaining enlightenment, yet with a residue of aggregates, which he will carry until his death. Final extinction occurs at his death when all remaining aggregates cease to exist which is referred to as *anupada parinirvana*.

Notwithstanding, though ignorance is reduced but not removed the becoming at relevant state of existence will be determined in accordance with the sense bases he grasps, i.e. those who grasp all six sense bases continue to remain in the sensuous world (*kamavacara)* but those who discard senses via nose, tongue and touch but grasp senses from eye and ear will form its becoming at material (*rupavacara*) state. Further release of remaining senses but the mind and emptiness of perception or 'space ' only will form his becoming in the in-material (*arupavacara*) state concludes Ven. Sudassana.

Appendix

Questions have been raised with Venerable Sudassana, by the lay followers, during dhamma discussions about the appropriateness of practicing dhamma as taught in these sermons for lay people who are busy with work and are caught up with domestic chaos. The response from the venerable has been that, following the path of dhamma and insight meditation doesn’t necessarily require one to go on recluse but can be practiced while living in a household. He further stresses that the challenge is to realise the truth while engaging in day to day life and not by closing eyes, ears, nose etc. and sitting behind closed doors.

Concerns have also been raised with regard to continuing relationships when one begin to observe the errors in grasping aggregates as son, daughter, mother father etc. It is clarified that though the practitioner begin to realise the defilements being developed in such relationships he or she need to be mindful that the other person/s with no such insight still associate him/her in the way they are used to see the person, say as father, mother or child, and hence, one needs to respond with compassion without hurting their feelings abruptly. Knowing both states, the practitioner should not hold on to extremes of either ‘everything exists’ or ‘everything does not exist ‘, but endeavour through the Middle Path as the Buddha has shown.

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